

EXHIBIT 17

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Charlottesville: man charged with murder was pictured at neo-Nazi rally

Pictures from earlier on day of clashes show James Fields with white supremacist group Vanguard America

Jason Wilson in Charlottesville, Virginia

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The man accused of murdering a woman by deliberately driving into her during protests against a far-right rally was photographed earlier in the day standing with the white supremacist, neo-Nazi group Vanguard America.

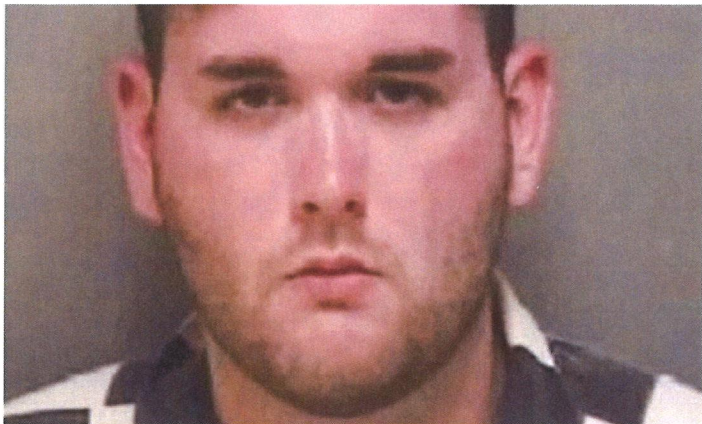
James Fields, 20, of Maumee, Ohio, allegedly killed Heather Heyer, aged 32, and injured 19 others when he rammed his car into a group peacefully protesting on Saturday in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Photographs from earlier that day appear to show Fields rallying with Vanguard America and carrying a shield bearing the group's insignia. He wears the white polo shirt and khaki pants that

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are the group's uniform.



James Fields. Photograph: Albemarle-Charlottesville regional jail/EPA

Vanguard America were a highly visible presence at the Unite the Right rally on Saturday, where they marched in military-style formation, and the torchlight rally the previous night on the University of Virginia campus. On the group's Twitter account, and on social media accounts belonging to regional chapters, there was extensive promotion of the Unite the Right rally in the weeks leading up to the event.

The group's motto, "blood and soil" was a popular chant at both events. It is derived from the Nazi slogan "*blut und boden*", which links conceptions of racial purity with a particular national territory.

Col Martin Kumer, the superintendent of Albemarle-Charlottesville regional jail, told the Guardian that Fields had been charged with second degree murder, three counts of malicious wounding and failing to stop at an accident that resulted in a death.

Witnesses said those hit by the car were peacefully protesting against the white supremacist rally and footage showed the vehicle crashing into another car, throwing people over the top of it. The incident with the car left 19 people injured, five critically.

Fields was one of four people who have been arrested over the violence on Saturday which included fighting and skirmishing between far-right protesters and counter-protesters.

Virginia police have not yet provided a motive for the attack using the vehicle but an Federal Bureau of Investigation field office said US attorneys and the FBI had opened a civil rights investigation into the crash.

The mother of Fields told the Associated Press on Saturday night that she knew her son was attending a rally in Virginia but did not know it was a white supremacist rally.

"I thought it had something to do with Trump. Trump's not a white supremacist," Samantha Bloom said, before becoming visibly upset as she learned of the injuries and deaths. "He had an African-American friend so ...," she said before her voice trailed off.

Fields had lived with his mother, reportedly a paraplegic, until around five or six months ago, the two of them having moved to Maumee from Florence, Kentucky, about a year ago for Bloom's work.

Neighbours of Bloom told a reporter from the Toledo Blade newspaper that they knew little about the 20-year-old although one resident, Laurie Schoonmaker, recalled that Fields often blasted polka music from his car when he was there. She had not seen him in months, she added.

According to an uncle who spoke to the Washington Post, Fields' father was killed by a drunk driver only a few months before the boy was born. His father left him money which the uncle kept in a trust.

"When he turned 18, he demanded his money and that was the last I had any contact with him," said the uncle, who spoke on condition of anonymity, adding that his nephew was "not really friendly, more subdued" when they met at family gatherings.

Fields' now deactivated Facebook page contained Nazi imagery including a photograph of Hitler as a baby, a picture of the Reichstag in Berlin, and a photograph of him posing with his car, the New York Daily News reported.

Derek Weimer, who taught Fields history when he was a student at Cooper high school in Union, Kentucky, told the TV station WCPO that he remembered a boy who was "very quiet and very bright," but one who believed in white supremacy and the Nazi ideology.

Military records appear to show that Fields served in the US army between August and December 2015.

Weimer said he recalled Fields had wanted to join the army after graduating but had been turned down because the teenager had been prescribed medicine for a psychotic disorder. "When you bring that in to the picture, and you bring the views, and you bring in the views of Nazism and white supremacism... you start to see it is like a perfect storm."

American Fascism

Vanguard America's manifesto, American Fascism, details its desire for a white ethnostate, the restoration of strictly patriarchal families and limiting the influence of "international Jews".

Of Vanguard America, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) says the group "is particularly focused on recruiting young men and has engaged in unprecedented outreach efforts to attract students on American college campuses". Its leader, military veteran Dillon Irizarry, has said "the future is the youth".

During the 2016-2017 school year, chapters were active in posting flyers on college campuses in 10 states, from Arkansas to Oregon. On the group's website, printable flyers bear slogans including "Beware the International Jew", "Imagine a Muslim-Free America", and "Fascism: The Next Step for America".

According to the ADL, the group claims 200 members in 20 states, and has paramilitary tendencies. Members have carried firearms at events in open carry states.

Leader Irizarry claims the group started in California. According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, the group split from "alt right" group American Vanguard. This group in turn arose from the neo-Nazi "Iron March" web forum. Other users of that forum have been involved in alleged violence: in May, Devon Arthurs, who had been active on the forum, was arrested for the murder of two roommates, who were also members of the forum.

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On Twitter on Saturday night, Vanguard America denied that Fields was a member, despite his presence with the group, and his uniform dress, saying that “shields were freely handed out to anyone in attendance”.

In a previous tweet commenting on the rally, they wrote: “Our members carry a purpose within them that drives them to risk their life and wellbeing for the cause. Bystanders won’t understand.”

Federal authorities are also looking into a helicopter crash on Saturday that killed two Virginia state police officers who were involved in efforts to quell the clashes.

The Associated Press contributed to this report